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By MATT OKARMUS - Associated Press

Sunday, March 2, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) - The transformation of downtown Montgomery shows no signs of slowing down as a portion of Dexter Avenue soon will be revitalized into a Market District.

Foshee Management Co. recently outlined both current and potential plans for the area stretching from Perry Street to Commerce Street and including Court Square. More than 100 modern loft apartments will be available, with space remaining for 20 retail stores or restaurants. The expected rent on the apartments will be \$675 to \$1,500 per month.

"We think the Market District is a game changer for Montgomery, and we are proud to announce that we are open for business," said Golson Foshee, president of Foshee Management.

Foshee said the company is in talks with businesses about locating in the area but he did not have any specifics to announce. He said signs advertising retail space will begin going up immediately on the vacant buildings.

Construction began last month with a single swing of a sledgehammer by Mayor Todd Strange, who took out a brick in the canopy in front of the former Belk building. The canopy removal will be followed by renovations on four more buildings along the south side of Dexter Avenue.

The upper floors of those buildings will be converted into loft apartments, leaving the first floor and basement available for new commercial tenants. In total, Foshee plans to develop 14 buildings in the district, though there is no timeline for having the buildings filled.

Foshee said there are many possible uses for the vacant buildings, including attractions such as a trampoline park or a boutique bowling alley.

"We want to provide a family friendly environment," he said.

A characteristic of the Market District upon completion will be the closing of vehicle traffic on weekends for special activities. Permitting only pedestrian access from the Court Square Fountain to Perry Street will allow for events such as street festivals, farmers markets and concerts. Officials estimated the area could be ready for weekend activities by spring 2015.

Strange agreed with Foshee on the significance of the redevelopment.

"It's a game changer in that we will redefine lower Dexter, and in redefining lower Dexter you then redefine the entire Dexter and the gateway into Montgomery," Strange said.

He said repurposing the area and renaming it the Market District will "bring life and vitality" and will be good for the entire city.

"Anytime you do something in your downtown, it's not just about downtown. It's about the energy of an entire city," Strange said. "You can't have a great city without having a great downtown. We are not there yet, but we are sure moving in the right direction."

The announcement of the Market District also served as the answer to various riddles that have appeared on billboards in and around downtown in the past two weeks. "What has four lanes but no traffic?" for example, referred to the closing of the street for weekend festivities.

Foshee, who referred to himself as a "third-generation Montgomerian," said he was happy to bring new activity to the city. **You are currently viewing the printable version of this article, to return to the normal page, please [click here](#).**

"We've traveled to other areas around the South, and we feel like this is the one thing missing in Montgomery," Foshee said. "We have the resources and feel it needs to happen."

Foshee also said preserving the history of the area will be important, adding the location still could be used as a teaching opportunity.

"There is a lot of rich history up and down this whole street," Foshee said. "We think that makes it attractive."

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Information from: Montgomery Advertiser, <http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com>
